

**Amendments to the specification:**

Amend the entire Description of the Preferred Embodiment Section as follows:

**DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENT**

As can be seen from the ~~figures~~ Figures, a mail opener generally designated as 1 comprises a rotary blade 2 carried by a rotatable shaft 3 which is displaceable along axis C. A of feed roller 4b and ~~pressure~~ pressure roller 4a are positioned adjacent and down stream of the rotary blade for drawing mail past the blade. The roller 4b and rotatable shaft 3 are driven by drive mechanism 5 which briefly comprises a drive motor 5a driving an idler shaft 5b and a belt drive 5c from the idler shaft 5b to the drive lower roller 4b, and speed adjustment means 5d for adjusting the speed of the drive motor 5a. The idler shaft also carries a gear which meshes with a gear carried by rotatable shaft 3 thereby rotating the cutter blade. The gear carried by the rotatable shaft is maintained in driven engagement with the drive gear by a spring.

A cam slider 6, displaceable in the direction of arrow B, comprises a strip of rigid material having an angled cam portion 7 which is inclined to the direction B of displacement of the cam slider. The cam portion has a slot 8 therein in which a free end of the rotatable shaft 3 is slidably engaged. An end portion 9 of the cam slider 6 interrelates with a pair of guides 11 which each have an angled slot 10 in which the end portion 9 is slidable. The pair of guides 11 are fixedly mounted to the print head carrier 12 of a postage meter. The print head carrier 12 carries the print head between printing and service positions of the print head.

The print head carrier 12 moves fore and aft along an axis designated by arrow A in figure 1. When printing of indicia is to be effected, the print head carrier 12 moves forward along axis A carrying with it guide pair 11. The mail opener body is fixed in position, relative to the postage meter. The cam slider 6, rotary cutter 2 and its shaft 3 are free to move relative to the body of the mail opener. Movement of the print head carrier of the postage meter forwardly to move the print head from the service position to the operative printing position, causes, due to engagement of the end portion 9 in the slots 10, movement of the cam slider 6 towards the print head carrier 12 along axis B. Consequent movement of the inclined cam portion 7 of the cam slider 6 draws the rotatable shaft 3 rearwardly in the direction of arrow C and thus the blade, carried by the shaft 3, is moved into a retracted position where it cannot be engaged by mail pieces and hence cannot inadvertently damage outgoing mail that has been passed through the postage meter.

When printing of a postage indicium has been completed, the print head carrier is moved rearwardly in the direction of arrow A to carry the print head from the operative printing position into the service position. As a result of this rearward movement of the print head carrier, the pair of guides 9 also move rearwardly in the direction of arrow A and the engagement of the end portion 9 of the cam slider 6 in the slots 10 of the pair of guides causes the cam slider 6 to move, in the direction of arrow B from left to right as seen in the drawings. The cam portion 7 acts on the end of the rotatable shaft 3 to move the shaft 3 and cutting blade 2 carried thereby in the direction of arrow C whereby the cutting blade is ~~movedd~~ moved from the inoperative retracted position into the operative mail piece opening position.

The mail opener is contained in a housing 13 which carries a

protective guard 14 to prevent inadvertent interference with and potential injury from the enclosed rollers and rotary blade. A mail guide 16 is provided on the mail opener which is aligned with a mail feeding guide 17 on the postage meter. When a mail piece is fed with an edge ~~17~~ 18 thereof in engagement with the guide 17 and the rotary cutter ~~cutter~~ 2 is in the operative mail ~~opening~~ opening position as shown in ~~figure~~ Figure 5, the rotary cutter blade 2 extends beyond the edge ~~17~~ 18 of the mail piece by a small distance sufficient such as to cut only the edge ~~17~~ 18 from the mail piece.

Consequently contents of the mail piece are not damaged by the action of the cutter blade. When the rotary cutter blade 2 is retracted to the ~~inoperative~~ operative position by the cam portion 7, the cutter blade is disposed at a position spaced from the edge ~~17~~ 18 of the mail piece in which the cutter blade cannot engage the mail piece.

Thus it can be seen that when the print head carrier moves the print head into an operative printing position, the cam portion 7 retracts the cutter blade into an inoperative position and when the print head carrier moves the print head into an inoperative printing position at the service position, the cam portion 7 moves the cutter blade into the operative position. Thus during franking of outgoing mail the mail opener is rendered inoperative.

As can be seen from Figure 5, a mail piece 15 is fed with an edge ~~17~~ 18 thereof just beyond the edge of the rotary blade 2 in its operating position. The mail piece 15 is fed by the postage meter under the rotating blade 2 and enters a nip between rotating feed roller 4b and idler roller 4a. The feed rollers 4a and 4b then draw the mail piece 15 past the blade 2 and the opened mail piece 15 is ejected.

The mail piece is guided by mail guide 16 to provide a straight cut adjacent to the edge 17 18 of the mail piece to avoid damage to the contents. While the rotary cutter is in its operating position as shown in Figure 5, the print head carrier 12 is in its service station position behind the mail guide 16. The dotted line indicates the position of the ~~printhead~~ print head carrier when the print head is in the operative printing position. When the rotary cutter 2 is in the retracted position, the rotary cutter is disposed to lie behind the surface of the mail guide 16 that is engaged by the mail pieces so that the rotary cutter cannot engage and damage the outgoing franked mail pieces.

It is to be understood that the foregoing represents just one embodiment of the invention others of which will no doubt appear to the skilled reader without deviation from the true scope of the invention as claimed in the appended claims.

In one embodiment, as illustrated in Figure 1, the mail opener 1 includes an electrical circuit 21 which is responsive to movement of the print head to operate the print head carrier 12 to locate the rotary blade 2 in the inoperative position in response to the print head carrier 12 being moved to the operative position.

In one embodiment, as illustrated in Figure 1, the postage meter includes signal generation means 23 which is operative to generate a signal in response to the print head moving to the operative position, and the electrical circuit 21 is responsive to the generated signal.